

XIX.—*Additional Field-Notes on the Birds of Fohkien.*

By C. B. RICKETT.

THE following notes bring the list of Fohkien Birds up to date, besides furnishing a few items of information on the distribution of some species in the Province and on the habits of others.

The positions of the places here named will be found on reference to my previous papers in 'The Ibis' for 1899, p. 173, and 1900, p. 52.

PYCNONOTUS ATRICAPILLUS (Vieill.).

Although this species is a common resident round Amoy, it rarely occurs at Foochow. I have met with it only four or five times, always in the winter months. La Touche records one specimen from Kuatun in October ('Ibis,' 1899 p. 414).

REGULUS CRISTATUS (Linn.).

A specimen in my collection was given to me by Styan. It was obtained by his collector at Kuatun, and is the only example that I have met with in the Province.

TRIBURA MELANORHYNCHA (Rickett).

The type was obtained at Kuatun on May 4.

Another specimen in La Touche's collection is labelled "Central Fohkien, March."

ARUNDINAX AËDON (Pall.).

I shot an example of this species close to Foochow in October, but never obtained another. It is, as Styan writes, "no doubt often overlooked owing to its very close general resemblance to *Acrocephalus orientalis*."

My bird was in a patch of thick scrub on a small hill quite away from any water.

LANIUS TIGRINUS Drap.

A male in full summer plumage was shot at Foochow on May 16, 1902. The testes were very largely developed. The stomach contained remains of grasshoppers and a beetle.

La Touche obtained one at Kuatun, also in May.

TEPHRODORNIS PELVICUS (Hodgs.).

On March 2nd my men came across a flock of fifteen individuals at Ah Ch'ung and secured them all. At the first shot the survivors flew wildly into the thickest part of the wood; but when the men came on them again they were perched near the top of a high tree, chattering in low tones, and allowed themselves to be shot down without making an attempt to escape.

This is, I think, the first record of this species from the mainland of China. It has occurred in Hainan.

COCCOTHAUSTES JAPONICUS Bp.

A few years ago I saw a caged specimen which was said to have been caught near Foochow. In January 1900 my collector shot a female, and in the following winter a male, both in this neighbourhood.

EMBERIZA CHRYSOPHRYS Pall.

Three or four specimens have been obtained by my collectors about Ching Fung in winter. I shot one myself near that place in December, but lost it in the thick scrub at the edge of a wood. It was in company with three or four individuals of *E. tristrami*.

EMBERIZA YESSOENSIS Swinh.

A specimen was shot near here in February 1902.

AMPELIS PHENICOPTERA T. & S.

Apparently a rare straggler. I have only two specimens, shot in January and April.

MOTACILLA BOREALIS Sundev.

Perhaps not uncommon on migration. I have a fine male in full summer plumage shot on April 1st, and another procured in October.

GECINUS CITRINO-CRISTATUS Rickett.

The type was obtained at Yamakan on December 5, 1899. La Touche has a specimen shot in March.

My collectors got the first example by a mere chance. They had been resting for some time under a tree, and were just moving away, when one of them happened to look up and saw

the bird, which he shot more because they had not obtained much that day than with any idea that it was worth shooting. I believe that I saw a specimen near the same place. It was seated on a large branch near the top of a high tree, where it remained quite still for a long time. At last it flew to an adjacent tree, and I saw at once that it was not any of our common Woodpeckers. I called one of the men and pointed the bird out to him. We sat down and watched it for a long time, during which it remained in the same position, merely moving its head now and then. At last my man risked a long shot without success, and we saw no more of it.

CHRYSOPHLEGMA RICKETTI Styan.

Styan himself shot the type at Yamakan on December 10, 1897. No other specimen was obtained (though my men kept a sharp look out for it) till December 1899, when, curiously enough, Styan's collector shot one at Ah Ch'ung. A third specimen has since been obtained at Ching Fung in October. In the stomach of the second we found insects and fragments of berries.

PITTA NYMPHA T. & S.

I have a fine male shot near Foochow on April 24, 1901. Two friends, to whom I shewed this specimen, assured me that they had seen a similar bird on two occasions this spring when staying at Sharp Peak, at the mouth of the river.

CYPSELUS SUBFURCATUS Blyth.

This is a species that occurs commonly at Amoy, but never, so far as I know, strays up to Foochow.

Swinhoe writes :—" I may here remark that I have never been able to trace it further north on the Chinese coast than Amoy " (' Ibis,' 1863).

CACOMANTIS MERULINUS (Scop.).

This common summer visitor about Amoy I have only met with once near Foochow.

The bird frequented some gardens near my house in April, where for some days its wearisome note, uttered through the whole day and far into the night, rendered it a positive

nuisance,—so much so, that one or two persons whose gardens it specially frequented offered rewards for its destruction. I tried to shoot it myself on two or three occasions, but so well did it conceal itself that, although I knew that it was within a very few yards of me, I could not get a glimpse of it. No sooner did I move away than it recommenced its irritating note.

At last a friend saw it fly up into a pine-tree early one morning, and shot it. Troublesome to the last, it lodged in the tree, and required several more shots to dislodge it, eventually reaching my hands a perfect rag.

La Touche shot a specimen at Amoy in *February*.

SCOPS LATOUCHII Rickett.

The type of this species was shot at Ah Ch'ung on December 16, 1899. Its stomach was crammed with minute insects such as one might find in that of a Warbler.

No other specimen has been obtained, so far as I am aware.

ARCHIBUTEO STROPHIATUS Gray.

A male was shot in February.

ACCIPITER VIRGATUS (Reinw.).

Occurs in winter, but not nearly so frequently as *A. nisus* or *A. gularis*.

ERYTHROPUS AMURENSIS Gurney.

I know of only two occurrences of this species, both in November.

? *FALCO PEREGRINATOR* Sundev.

A skin sent home by me was pronounced by the Rev. H. H. Slater to be *F. atriceps* Hume (*Ibis*, 1894, p. 223).

In 'The Ibis' for 1896, pp. 530, 531, Mr. Ogilvie-Grant writes:—"No doubt the Rev. H. H. Slater has correctly referred the *F. melanogenys* Rickett from Foochow to this continental form" (i. e., *F. peregrinator*).

Last year I took home another specimen, which I compared with the type of *F. atriceps*, and it appeared to me to agree very closely with it.

This specimen is now in the British Museum.

COTURNIX JAPONICA Cassin.

Common at certain times and in certain seasons.

In the early part of November, when the second crop of rice has been cut, very fair Quail-shooting may, in some years, be had on the stubbles. As soon as these are ploughed up the birds scatter about the country, and are found on grassy hill-sides, in vegetable-gardens, and the like.

This applies to *C. communis* as well as *C. japonica*, and hybrids of the two species are by no means uncommon.

ARBORICOLA RICKETTI Grant.

In 'The Ibis' for 1900, p. 59, I wrote:—"My man describes the note as a low 'goo, goo, goo.'" This, owing to his having (like most of his countrymen) no notion of whistling, gives a very poor idea of the sound.

I have myself since heard the note more than once. It is a plaintively whistled "hu-u-u," rising slightly in tone at the end, and has a peculiarly melancholy effect when often repeated. At times the birds utter a much shriller series of notes, which are very rapid and in an ascending scale.

They frequent thick scrub on the hill-sides or underwood at the edge of patches of forest. They are difficult to flush, but, when on the wing, dart through the cover at great speed for twenty or thirty yards, only to drop again and squat closely.

TOTANUS STAGNATILIS Bechst.

Apparently not common. I know of only three or four specimens obtained in October, and two shot at the end of September 1902, out of a small flock of Greenshanks.

LARUS VEGÆ Stejn.

Not at all uncommon on our coast during the winter months.

PUFFINUS LEUCOMELAS Temm.

A few specimens shot off the coast in July and November.

DIOMEDEA NIGRIPES Aud.

La Touche has a specimen.

PLATALEA LEUCORODIA Linn.

I have obtained only one specimen of this species. It was shot in January and gave the following measurements:—Wing 15·3 in., tarsus 6·2, culmen 8·7. The crest was not fully developed, the longest feather being 2·5 in.

One secondary in the left wing was dark-shafted, while the shafts of two or three primaries were faintly darkened near the tips. The tip of the first primary in the right wing had two tiny dark spots, otherwise the dress was that of the adult. Bill black, spatule yellow.

HERODIAS ALBA (Linn.).

In the Cat. B. Brit. Mus. vol. xxvi. p. 99, the Chinese bird is described as *H. timoriensis*, which differs from *H. alba* in having “the bill yellow in summer and winter, the train of dorsal feathers not very long and scarcely reaching beyond the tail.”

This description certainly does not apply to the bird that we used to meet with about Foochow before the “plume trade” deprived us of all our Egrets.

In my four examples of this species in breeding-dress the dorsal trains extend three or four inches beyond the tail, and in one at least the bill is blackish.

La Touche, to whom I referred the question, writes as follows:—“My experience is that birds in breeding-plumage have generally greenish-black bills. The trains are always very long, at least in the males, and extend far beyond the tail.”

HERODIAS EULOPHOTES Swinhoc.

Here again I am unable to agree with the ‘Catalogue.’ In vol. xxvi. p. 141, Dr. Sharpe writes:—“It is with great hesitation that I have added the name of *Demiegretta eulophotes* to the long list of synonyms of *D. sacra*.”

In order to throw some light on this subject, I took to England with me in 1900 four fine specimens of *H. eulophotes* in breeding-plumage. These, together with one that I had previously presented to the Museum, and two of Swinhoc’s skins (one of which was the type), formed a sufficiently good

series to work upon. After comparing them with the large series of *D. sacra* in the Museum collection, I came to the conclusion that the two birds were quite distinct.

My reasons for thinking so are as follows :—

Firstly. The crests in the two species are *quite* different.

D. sacra has a very short and bushy crest.

In *H. eulophotes* the crest is long, the longest feathers exceeding 4 in. in length. Swinhoe describes it as “springing from the occiput and forming a full ornamental crest, the highest ones being longest and measuring $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. each, the length diminishing gradually to the lower ones.”

Secondly. The dorsal plumes differ very greatly.

In *D. sacra* these are lanceolate feathers with decomposed edges and are worn by adult birds at all seasons.

In *H. eulophotes* they form a dorsal train of the well-known Egret plumes which, in good specimens, extend about an inch beyond the tail, but are not recurved at the tips as in *H. garzetta*. These plumes are only worn in the nesting-season.

Thirdly. The colouring of the soft parts in *H. eulophotes* differs from that in *D. sacra* as given in the writings of Indian ornithologists. Our bird in the breeding-season has yellow irides and bill. The bare skin in front of the eye is *bright blue*. Tarsus and base of toes black ; rest of toes yellow.

Fourthly. In habits *H. eulophotes* is an Egret. It frequents rice-fields, or the sides of inland ponds and creeks, and often nests on the same trees as *H. garzetta*. My collectors have never met with it on the coast.

La Touche, to whom I have submitted the substance of these remarks, writes :—“ No additional notes on this species. The soft parts in breeding specimens are as described. Some specimens have the blue not so bright.”

CICONIA BOYCIANA Swinhoe.

A fine adult specimen in La Touche's collection is labelled “ Foochow, autumn 1900 or spring 1901.” It measures (in the skin) :—Wing 25·25 in., culmen 9·80, tarsus 10·50.

CYGNUS MUSICUS Bechst.

Six examples were shot on the river out of a "herd" of ten in December 1899.

ANSER RUBRIROSTRIS Hodgson.

I have only once met with this species. It was a male shot in November.

ANSER OATESI Rickett, Bull. B. O. C. vol. xi. p. 46.

On my return to Foochow I heard that Mr. C. McAllum, of the Imp. Maritime Customs at Santu, had observed some small Geese in the Bay during the previous winter. I consequently wrote to him and he kindly favoured me with the following information:—

There were in all about forty birds in the flock, which he had often tried to approach, but without success. On one occasion, however, when he had no gun, they rose within easy shot, and he noted that their legs appeared to be flesh-coloured. They seemed to prefer rice-fields to the mud-flats, "and rose without the cries common to the other Geese."

Santu is situated in Samscha Bay, an inlet a few miles north of the mouth of the river. It was there that the type was obtained.

OIDEMIA CARBO (Pall.).

Occurs in winter, but is not common. All the specimens that I have seen were in immature plumage.

XX.—*An Annotated List of the Birds observed on the Orange River between Aliwal North and Odendaalstroom from Dec. 21st, 1901, to June 21st, 1902.* By C. H. T. WHITEHEAD, Lieut. 1st Bat. Highland Light Infantry.

[MR. WHITEHEAD was stationed during the latter part of the South-African war in the line of blockhouses running along the Orange River between Aliwal North and Norval's Pont. I had some correspondence with him in regard to birds, and asked him to keep notes of all those he met with. This